Counterplan Theory

Running theory against counterplans is very strategic because it allows you to generate offense and preclude it. Making an argument to reject your opponent’s counterplan is often sufficient because counterplans are the gateway to offense for Neg.

Can a counterplan be topical, in that it would still Affirm the resolution in its text?

Logically, topical counterplans prove the resolution true, albeit for a different reason than in the 1AC. In policy, however, topical counterplans are widely accepted. Once Aff parametricizes the round, Neg gains exclusive access to the lost ground against Aff’s chosen advocacy. Also, if Aff limits his ground and what he must defend, Neg must not be able to run generic disadvantages that don’t apply.

How does competition work?

First, counterplans can be mutually exclusive. Second, counterplans can be net beneficial. Functionally / mechanically competitive counterplans operate in such a way that both literally cannot be done. Textually competitive counterplans would require changing the text of the 1AC. Plan-minus PICs may be textually competitive, but plan-plus PICs are not. Functional competition may be better than textual competition because it actually determines whether we could do both in the real world rather than playing grammar games. Further, it evaluates true opportunity costs and discourages plan texts. Textual competition prevents the exploitation of vagueness in plans, while functional competition allows for debaters to make up fake competition stories.

What are the types of counterplans?

Plan exclusive counterplans and plan inclusive counterplans. Plan exclusive counterplans often lack inherency.

PECs are relatively theoretically benign. PICs are a different story. They are almost always topical. They moot almost all Aff offense. They often cannot be permed because they are the plan with a small change. Perhaps the most abusive type of counterplan is a PCC, a plan contingent counterplan. These take the plan and say we should only do it if another thing happens outside the resolution. Delay counterplans are unpredictable because you never know for how long the delay lasts. Also, the future is unpredictable, which skews ground in the debate because we can’t gauge what will happen. Consult counterplans sever the durability of fiat. Essentially, the plan won’t get repealed in the future. However, if the consulting agent says no, then the plan does not get passed. PCCs could be said to functionally compete because they sever the plan’s immediacy. Also, PCCs test the plan text and the resolution, which is key to Neg ground. Further, PCCs foster careful plan writing to avoid timeframe issues. Arguments against PCCs are fairly persuasive. Under textual competition, the PCC can be permed because it only requires adding words to the plan. Also, the immediacy of the plan was not in the text. Further, the PCC passes the plan unchanged, but it only passes under certain conditions. For fairness, the number of antecedents for PCCs is infinite and unpredictability. Also, the PCC tends to moot all AC offense.

The two somewhat legitimate PICs are exclusion PICs and agent PICs. By fiating another agent, Neg is being unrealistic because it can never guarantee what another agent will do. However, the point of plan and counterplan debates is to question whether a policy is ideal, not whether it’s realistic to expect the action. There is also object fiat, where Neg solves for the harms that Aff solves. General PICs good arguments: allow Aff to sever a part of the plan. Educational because allow to discuss real details. Real world because how actual policy happens. Fair ground under policymaker framework. Generic PICs bad arguments: They steal ground from the 1AC. PICs overspecify a plan text. PICs are infinitely regressive: you could PIC out of anything.

What are the statuses of counterplans?

Conditional: you can kick at any point. Unconditional: can’t kick at any point. Dispositional: can kick unless they straight turn it. People argue that both conditional and dispositional counterplans are dumb because there are few speeches.

What are the types of perms?

Timeframe perm: do one, then the other.

Severance perm: severs part of the 1AC, often abusive because makes you a moving target.

Intrinsic perm: do the plan and something that’s in neither advocacy.

Advocating multiple perms is a bad idea because now you’re supporting multiple advocacies. However, multiple perms is okay if you’re only testing competition.